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THE ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE ON EAST TIMOR PROGRAM**

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Indeed, the Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor is to bring home to Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, the East Timor issue. Of course, it would be more ideal to hold this in Dili, but a few thousand miles away would have been good enough. The Philippines and East Timor anyway share some interesting things in common. We are the only two Asian countries with a predominant Catholic population and the only ones colonized by the two Iberian counties, Portugal and Spain.

The program evolved by the Philippine Convenors Group in consultation with our International Co-convenors will essentially tackle three dimensions of the East Timor struggle: legal, political, cultural. But we have tried to weave this into a cohesive whole with more workshops and cultural interactions. The Asian and Indonesian perspectives will likewise be given ample time for discussions.

The first day will focus on an update on the East Timor struggle from the perspective of the major Timorese groups.

The second day will feature the "Current Indonesian Climate and Prospects for East Timor Resistance".

The culminating day will be the plenary presentation of resolutions, plans, communiques, or what-have-you. Caucuses and press conferences can follow in the afternoon. The remaining time will also be a good occasion for the solidarity groups to meet. We hope that by this time an Asian network for East Timor would have been born. Of course, our East Timorese friends may also find this time an opportunity to meet, discuss and respond to the conference outputs.

One burning desire that the Philippine Convenors Group have is to make this conference a time and venue for establishing, consolidating, and expanding our respective networks, solidarity, concerns, and friendships. We look forward to a working conference that will be both concrete, hardworking, yet enjoyable, fun, passionate and loud -- so Asia and the rest of the world can hear the anguish, laughter, and determined struggle that is East Timor.

So come to UP on May 31 and be part of this historic endeavor. Come and perhaps together, we might rediscover ourselves.

** This was written before the East Timor conference became an instant international and diplomatic issue